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Letters To The Editor

Below is an open letter to the patrons of the McLean Volunteer Fire Department:

I take this method to express an humble "thank you" for your past support and the many telephone calls and personal expressions of support in our drive to secure financial assistance from the CIA. Your calls were especially heartening following Mike Turpin's telecasts of October 26 and 31.

As benefactors of the McLean Volunteer Fire Department, you have been more than fair. We appreciate your gratitude and it is our sincere feeling that you, as a resident of McLean, should not bear the expense of financing the ambulance and fire service rendered by your department to the CIA.

I regret this approach, but after two years of being nice and trying to practice the art of good human relations, I can truthfully report this method has failed. Our contributions from the CIA total absolutely NOTHING.

It has been suggested that we discontinue service to this huge government installation but, that would not be in keeping with the tradition of a volunteer fire department. This suggestion we will not accept.

Called on R. F. Kennedy

Recently I called at the home of Attorney General and Mrs. Robert F. Kennedy, to enlist their aid in our behalf, but they were not at home. After Mr. Turpin's telecast, of October 31, I received a call on November 2, from Mr. Andrew Ochmann, the Attorney General's secretary, advising the CIA director and the Attorney General were working on the problem. I was asked not to pursue the matter for another few days.

Congressman Joel T. Broyhill has written the CIA, Civil Defense and the General Services Administration in our behalf. Congressman Broyhill received answers with lots of sympathy, but no money for the McLean Volunteer Fire Department. However, Congressman Broyhill has stated he will, on the opening day of the next session of Congress, introduce an enabling act to assist us.

Upon completion of the CIA installation, the contractor gave the Department one thousand dollars in appreciation of our services. By the same token, last year, you bought 4,000 tickets, at \$1 each for our annual dance. YOU contributed approximately \$3,000 in our fund-raising drive and YOU contributed approximately \$1,200 at our "golf" show. The McLean Volunteer Fire Department is grateful of the action YOU have done, your part.

At this point, I would like to give a quick resume of what we do and how we handle your money.

All our equipment is in excellent condition. We have a continuous training program with our equipment and in first aid. The four paid firemen and your volunteer firemen are very adept at handling ladders and other equipment as a result of this training. On volunteer time they have contributed many man hours to this training.

Further, the volunteers leave the comfort of their homes to sleep at the firehouse, to better enable them to be on call should you need their services at night. This is a small example of the pride we take in our work.

I am happy to report to you, after a call, the department can be out of the firehouse and on their way to a fire in the short space of ten to fifteen seconds during the waking hours. At night we can be out of the firehouse in from thirty to sixty seconds after a call. Also, we can be at the CIA in two and one-half minutes with two pieces of equipment and five men. Other pieces of equipment follow very shortly. Since 1959, we have responded to 135 calls from the CIA.

It would seem to me the McLean Volunteer Fire Department operates as a paid department and only the time is volunteered. We have six professional fire fighters and the others function as professionals. The entire department takes pride in its training and the equipment YOU have given us. All we ask is the CIA assist YOU in the maintenance and expense of our operation.

From time to time, I will keep you posted on the progress of our two-year running argument with the CIA.

James Byrnes, Jr. Chief
McLean Volunteer Fire Dept.